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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8321
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000754

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MARCHESE/HARDING; DPET FOR NEA, DS, H
AND CA

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: EAC SETS TRIPWIRE OF ARMY ENTRY INTO
NAHR EL-BARAD REFUGEE CAMP

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: Section 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

SUMMARY

1. (S) On May 29, DCM chaired a full session of the Embassy Beirut EAC. Principal subjects included the increasing frequency of credible threat information against western and Lebanese government interests, tensions arising from the standoff at the Nahr el-Barad Palestinian refugee camp, and an impending UNSC vote to adopt under Chapter VII an international tribunal for Lebanon. Members of the EAC concurred that if the Lebanese Army were to enter the Nahr el-Barad Palestinian refugee camp to attack Fatah al-Islam extremists, Embassy personnel should cancel all off-compound personal moves, and conduct official moves only for the highest priority activities. The EAC noted that access in and out of Beirut's International Airport is especially vulnerable to being cut off by Shia or other protesters in the event of civil disorder. The EAC agreed to meet again on May 30 at 1600 hrs. local to decide whether CODEL Leahy should come to Lebanon as planned for about five hours on May 31. End Summary.

2. (S) At mid-morning on May 29, the DCM convened a full meeting of the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to discuss rising threats and tensions in Lebanon, and likely risks to the official and non-official American community. Reporting from other channels was summarized with regard to an increase in credible threats against Western interests, including the UNIFIL peacekeeping mission, as well as against the Government of Lebanon. For the past week, tensions have remained high in regard to the standoff between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) on one hand, and Fatah al-Islam extremists inside the Nahr el-Barad Palestinian refugee camp on the other hand. Related issues included the May 25 speech of Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, in which Nasrallah declared LAF entry into the Nahr el-Barad camp to be a "red line" that should not be crossed; the risk of violence in other Palestinian refugee camps such as Aid el-Hilweh; a shoot-out the previous day near the Beirut International Airport; the capacity of the anti-government protesters to shut down at will the access roads in and out of Beirut International Airport; and the resolve and the military capacity of the Lebanese government to take military action at Nahr el-Barad.

3. (S) The EAC agreed that if the LAF were to invade the Nahr el-Barad camp, such action would most likely occur in

the May 31- June 1 timeframe. If the LAF does enter the camp, the EAC agreed that given the likely sharp rise in security threats, all USG personnel should restrict their off-compound moves to official business only, and such official moves would only be authorized on the basis of high priority mission needs. In the event of an LAF entry into the camp, we would also withdraw from the airport and remove to the compound a group of eight USG cargo handlers who are facilitating delivery to the Lebanese of USG-origin ammunition shipments arriving at Beirut International Airport. Another group of U.S. military trainers who are at the LAF's Ranger training facility would remain at that site, given its strong security.

¶4. (S) CODEL Leahy: The EAC was concerned that violent action in or near Beirut International Airport could affect the arrival or departure of CODEL Leahy on May 31. In the past, access roads in and out of the airport have been closed down by protesters. The EAC agreed to meet on May 30 at 1600 hrs. local to make a final recommendation on whether CODEL Leahy should maintain or cancel its visit to Beirut.

¶5. (S) The EAC agreed that increasing tensions and threat reports merit the issuance of another warden message to the American community in Lebanon. It was noted that none of the threat reporting was specific or counterable with respect to particular times or places. The Consular Chief will draft for Department approval an updated warden message.

¶6. (C) EAC members noted that Embassy Beirut personnel had substantially cut back their off-compound personal moves during the past several days, including the holiday weekend. They also noted that strikingly few Lebanese were out on the streets during the weekend evenings, in contrast to the usually large crowds at shopping malls, cinemas, and

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restaurant districts.

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